

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 01589 241140Z

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 DHA-02 VO-03 SCA-01 INSE-00 SSO-00

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O 241101Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7254

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FOR LOWMAN DHA/ORM

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF, VS

SUBJ: VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM DANANG

REFS: A) BANGKOK 1533 B) BANGKOK 1427

1. AS PER SHEPLEY/LOWMAN TELECON 24 JANUARY 76, EMBASSY WISHES TO FLAG FOR DEPARTMENT'S ATTENTION THE CASE OF THREE VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WHO ARRIVED FROM DANANG, VIETNAM, ON 20 JANUARY 76, ABOARD GREEK MERCHANT SHIP "FELICITY" PRIOR TO THE VESSEL'S DEPARTURE FROM DANANG THE REFUGEES LISTED BELOW:
TRAN QUOC DUNG, AGE 18
PHAM NGOC PHIEU, AGE 19
TO VAN LAM, AGE 20
BOARDED THE "FELICITY" AS STOWAWAYS AND WERE TRANSPORTED TO BANGKOK.

2. EMBOFF HAS HAD EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH SHIP'S CAPTAIN AND WITH THE THREE REFUGEES TO ASCERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR PRESENCE ON THE SHIP AND THE INTENTION OF THE SHIP COMMAND WITH RESPECT TO THESE REFUGEES IN THE EVENT THAI AUTHORITIES DO NOT PERMIT THEM TO ENTER THAILAND. THE CAPTAIN IS UNDER INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIS HEADQUARTERS IN ATHENS TO TAKE THE ABOVE
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 01589 241140Z

NAMED REFUGEES BACK TO VIETNAMESE TERRITORIAL WATERS

FOR PICKUP BY VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES ENROUTE TO NEXT
PORT OF CALL, SINGAPORE, IF REFUGEES ARE NOT ALLOWED TO
REMAIN IN THAILAND. SHIP IS SCHEDULED TO DEPART
BANGKOK AT SIX A.M. MONDAY 26 JANUARY.

3. THE REFUGEES ARE ALL FORMER HIGH SCHOOL AND
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FROM DANANG AND CLAIM THEY ESCAPED
FROM VIETNAM BECAUSE OF THEIR STRONG OPPOSITION TO NEW
VIETNAMESE REGIME. EMBOFF NOTED SINCERITY OF THEIR
RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS AND BELIEVES THEIR ANSWERS TO BE
LEGITIMATE. WHEN QUESTIONED ABOUT RELATIVES IN THE U.S.,
ONLY ONE OF THE REFUGEES, TO VAN LAM, WAS ABLE TO CLAIM
AN IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBER IN THE U.S. EMBASSY HAS
REQUESTED VERIFICATION OF THIS CLAIM IN SEPTTEL. (REF B).

4. WHEN THE POSSIBILITY WAS SUGGESTED TO REFUGEES THAT
THEY MAY HAVE TO RETURN TO VIETNAM, THEY WERE TERRIFIED
AND STATED EMPHATICALLY THAT IT WAS THEIR BELIEF THEY WOULD
BE SUMMARILY EXECUTED SHOULD THEY BE FORCIBLY REPATRIATED.

5. IN VIEW OF THE UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES CONCERNING THIS
CASE AND THE SHORT TIME FRAME AVAILABLE TO ARRANGE FOR
REFUGEES' TEMPORARY ADMISSION INTO THAILAND, EMBASSY RE-
QUESTS DEPARTMENT CONTACT INS WASHINGTON TO MAKE A CASE FOR
THEIR IMMEDIATE PAROLE INTO THE U.S. ON HUMANITARIAN
GROUNDS. AS A MATTER OF POLICY, EMBASSY CONTINUES
TO SUPPORT VIEW THAT PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR
DISPOSITION OF REFUGEES ARRIVING IN THAILAND RESTS WITH
RTG AND UNHCR AND WILL CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE THESE
ENTITIES TO ASSUME PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY. HOWEVER,
GIVEN THE OVERRIDING HUMANITARIAN INTERESTS OF THIS
CASE, THE CLAIM OF ONE OF THE REFUGEES TO HAVE A FATHER
IN THE U.S., AND IN RESPONSE TO WRITTEN APPEAL FROM THE
UNHCR FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE BECAUSE OF SHORT TIME FRAME
AVAILABLE FOR DISPOSITION OF THIS CASE, EMBASSY BELIEVES
THAT AN EXCEPTIONAL PROCEDURE IS JUSTIFIED.

6. RESPONSE REQUIRED BY SIX P.M. SUNDAY,
JANUARY 25 TO ENSURE ADEQUATE TIME TO ARRANGE IMMIGRATION
FORMALITIES WITH THE THAI AUTHORITIES PRIOR TO THE SHIP'S
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PAGE 03 BANGKO 01589 241140Z

DEPARTURE.
MASTERS

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